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HOMEOWNERS' CHAT

Thursday, May 23, 1940.

Subject: "NUTRITION QUESTIONS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Questions before the house today center around nutrition problems. We're indebted to Dr. Lela E. Booher, head of the nutrition work in the Bureau of Home Economics, for the answers to most of these questions.

Let's start out with this one first: "Isn't good nutrition or good diet the same for everybody? I mean, doesn't the human body need certain food elements, regardless of people's income or the kind of work they do? The other day I heard a discussion about 'adequate nutrition for the industrial worker.' Do people who work in factories need different food from those who work on farms?"

Dr. Booher says that many people have an idea that industrial work requires great physical effort. Some factory work is routine and monotonous. But, actually, many industrial workers are not called on for any heavier physical exertion than the average secretary, housewife, barber, or taxi driver. Such workers do not need any special kind of food or more food than other folks.

The next question is about food calories. Calories, of course, is the word the scientists use to measure our energy needs. This writer asks:

"How many calories a day does the average person require?"

And Dr. Booher explains that food requirements depend on whether the person is a man or a woman,---how large---and how old he or she happens to be,---what his or her activities are. An average man needs about 2400 calories a day. That is, if he lives an ordinary life, in a temperate climate, and doesn't do any particularly hard work. An average woman needs about 15 percent fewer calories than a man.



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But we all need additional food for every hour of harder work ---- work that calls for muscular activity. Some of our ordinary jobs, even our recreations, may be hard work, physically speaking. Take carpentry, for instance, or bicycling, skating, dancing, running, swimming, playing tennis, or sawing wood. All these chores and sports increase the need for calories---- make us hungry for more food. So maybe we want a little extra meal, in the middle of the morning or the afternoon.

Dr. Booher says that a man doing light work or exercise might need a fourth more food than the inactive man who needs 2400 calories a day. And a person doing very active hard work might need twice as much as someone who sits quietly at his work. To give you an idea how this extra food might be supplied, an ordinary half inch slice of plain bread or toast weighs about an ounce and furnishes about 60 calories. When you butter it, that adds more calories- the thicker the butter, the more calories. A scant glass of milk gives you 150 calories. The extra calories soon add up. And don't forget that large helpings of cereals, fats, and sweets, also the fruits, vegetables, eggs and meats you eat can supply still more of these extra calories.

This matter of extra meals comes up again in another letter. This is from a woman who wants to know if there is any real harm in eating between meals. She says: "I happen to be one of those who do not care for a long heavy meal. But after a light breakfast I like a glass of milk and crackers, or a banana, about 11 o'clock. And a cup of tea with a cookie between 4 and 5 in the afternoon."

The experts say that lady has worked out a sensible schedule for her particular needs. And some of the findings in industry back her up. For instance, in a large manufacturing plant investigators found that workers who ate two small extra lunches of milk and cake or milk and bananas in mid-morning and mid-afternoon felt less tired and did more work than those who ate only 3 regular meals a day. If this change from 3 large meals to 5 moderate or light meals is good for factory workers,

maybe it would help a woman working at home. Some of her jobs come in the class of "hard work". And the same is true for very active children. They often need milk or orange juice between their regular meals.

Now here's a question from a mother whose daughter is afraid starchy foods, fats, and milk will make her put on weight. The mother asks: "Is it right for my daughter to eat a lot of meat and other proteins and cut down on these other foods? Isn't there some definite rule she ought to stick to?"

The Bureau of Home Economics says that by all means she should stick to a rule, whether she wants to lose or gain weight or stay as she is. The rule is to have a well-balanced assortment of foods. This means plenty of fruit and the leafy green and yellow vegetables, and some milk for vitamin and mineral needs; eggs, meat, cheese, for good protein; with cereals, starchy vegetables, fats, and sweets added according to the number of calories she requires.

The daughter who is afraid of getting too fat had better watch the sweets, starches and fats. But she shouldn't cut them out altogether. And she shouldn't leave out milk. A pint of milk doesn't compare with many desserts in fattening qualities.

More nutrition questions some other day.

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